Chapter V

CONCLUSION
African Society is shaped with historical experiences, cultural impact of external sources and interaction between one culture and another. The relationship between man and universe is the foundation of traditional based African society which influence with an obscure past. Such history of African society disturbed with colonialism rather than traditional and cultural milieu. Songs and myth and Oral traditions become the echoes of African way of life.

The beginning of modern African literature traced to the works of missionary institutions throughout the continent. Such African and its cultural diversity written by the authors like Leopold Sedgar, Aime Cesaire, and Leon Damas. Some of the authors like Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Flaura Nwapo tried to capture reality as well as the culture of the Africans. At the end of the colonialism in the region of West Africa Nigeria is the country where African writing developed rather than any other countries.

Traditional African Theatre has continued to exist in spite of the invasion of modern culture as well as theatre from outside Africa. Traditional Theatre, Drama, culture and history lies in the special oral nature of the African people. African traditional theatre similar in some aspect to the Greek or Hellenistic theatre, Such African theatre also called as Total Theatre which completely different from western theatre. Theatre in Africa is obviously an arena of greater vigor than other literary forms and it appears to be the dialogic variation. Along with this, Theatre in Africa also reflects the varying rhythms of other spheres of African culture in terms of music, dance, and spectacle.
In Africa, there have been a very large number of theatre companies, out of that Hubert Ogunde, E.k Ogumola, Duro Ladipo and Moses Olaiya Adejumo are the main ones. West African Drama divided into three categories. The first is propagandists play demonstrates political and cultural point of view in the writing of Ene Henshaw of Nigeria and Sarif Eamson of Sierra Leone. The second category includes traditional African idea and its explosure beyond the traditional boundry in the works of Efua Sutherland of Ghana, J.P Clark of Nigeria and some of wole Soyinka’s plays. The Third section includes the satirical plays which are represented by majority of Wole Soyinka’s plays as well as the plays of J.C. de Graft and Christina Aidoo.

Nigerian Culture is an amalgamation of diverse ethnic group and the resemblance of this multi-ethnic and multi-religious backdrop. Nigerian Society concerns with Hausa-fulani, Nupe, Kanuri, Igbaland tribes follows Muslim religious traditions. Such traditional expression of the Nigerian people as seen in their proverbs, songs, tales, legends, myths and riddles indicates the folklore. In traditional Nigerian culture, gods are believed to approach people through their cultic acts of worship. Role of ancestors plays a role of mediators between god and man.

Nigerian Literature embarks on the oral traditions including folklore, proverb, myths, and stories pionered by the heroes of their literary past, Such as royal bards, warriors, story tellers, and priests. Nigerian literature consist not only songs, tales and short poems but also extensive universe of narratives of epic proportion. Apart from poetry, Nigeria has sculpted oral narratives and stories from the tradition of the daily life of common man.
During mid nineteenth century Church missionary Society attached with Nigerian Society. Most of the Nigerian Novelists are conscious about disturbances of western culture on Nigerian tradition; such writers are Chinua Achebe, Onuora Nzekwu, Gabriel Okara and Timothy Aluko. Some of the male authors like Chinua achebe, Elechi Amadi, Cryprian Ekwensi and female authors such as Flaura Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adechie who deal with issues of war and slave history.

The ethnic group who resides in the south western part of Nigeria is called the Yorubas. They believe Oludumare as the creator of the universe. As per the Yoruba myth, God resides in the sky. During nineteenth century the arrival of the Christian missionaries made a huge impact on the Yoruba people. The social, cultural, political and economical structure of the yoruban ethnic group had been founded in Ile-Ife during the earlier nineteenth century. Art in Yoruba language and literature improves after the establishment of university of Ibadan in 1948.

The contemporary Yoruba theatre can be viewed as the culmination of a socio-political development began around the middle of nineteenth century in Lagos. Along with Soyinka a number of writers and literary activists both in writing and performance have taken place in Nigerian society. Some of them major Playwright are Femi Osofisan, Ola Rotimi, etc.

Modern drama was introduced in Nigeria a few years after the British conquest of its main city called Lagos in 1851. In Nigerian art scenario folk opera and Nigerian drama flourished with traditional and ritual drama. In Nigerian context dance and mime is more important in the case of traditional
drama. The dialogue, in traditional, ritual or in folk opera is conveyed through drums apart from human speech. Masquerades symbolizes the union between man and God. It helps to create a connection between man and those ancestors who got eternal life through death.

During 1960, written Nigerian literature is restricted to a few indigenous languages, such as Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. The lineage of Yoruba literature reflects the fact that it has attained its ripeness in the first decades of the twentieth century. Nigerian Literary plays started budding from the late 1950s with English as a medium of expression. Such plays developed by the travelling theatre companies which considered as modern Yoruba plays. Adebayon Babalola, J.Fodunjo and such other playwrights becomes a popular writing in Yoruba. Certain Yoruba performing artists of the western part of Nigeria such as Afolabi Olabimtan, Kola Akinlade, Adekanmi Oyedele, tried to write in their mother tongue in order to reach the local audience neglecting both international and national appreciation. At the same time Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan achieved international fame writing Yoruba issues in English.

Wole Soyinkas’s plays are a landmark in the African history because of their themes and techniques as he has incorporated in his plays. He is a key playwright to show the direction among black playwright. While talking about the themes and techniques, he is inimitable in the sense that he has searched out a new cultural dynamics of the African ethnic group. Hence, it can be said that he is one of the key artists to explore the social, economical and cultural consciousness of the Africans. In this connection, Adedeji says that, “Soyinka’s theatre presents a background of unique cultural experiences and artistic
forms...his theatre is therefore illuminated by tripodal aesthetic of Folkloricism, Structuralism, and theatricalism” (104-05). Thus, the contribution of Wole Soyinka in the African theatre and literature is unavoidable.

Wole Soyinka is multidimensional and multidirectional force in the African dramatic tradition. The intellectual and artistic use of history, memory, ritual and time-space is experimental in the African theatre. The dramaturgy of Wole Soyinka is full of ups and downs. He is representative of cultural dilemma of his own tribe. These things are reflected in his plays, as he has used plays as a weapon against bad practices in the society. Hence, the sense and sensibility of Soyinka’s plays are quite penetrating and momentous.

The Specialty of Wole Soyinka is that he operated the Yoruba issues with logical sequences. Therefore, his plays are the collection of events and experiences in the form of dramatic art. The foremost features of Soyinka’s dramaturgy are that he links his own past struggle and experience with the present through his plays. His struggles and experiences are his collective memories of the past. The Yoruba peoples for express their ideas, feelings, faith and convictions through Yoruba songs. Therefore, they express their own music to express their cultural consciousness. Music is a code to connect the Yoruba People with their glorious culture and tradition. Soyinka has rightly understood the key significance of music and considered it to explore Yoruba culture through the means of playwright and theatrical art. Many characters in Soyinka’s plays express their feelings through Yoruba songs. Soyinka has turned musical form of Yoruba people for theatre by using different dramatic techniques and tricks.
Carrying history from generation to generation is key aspect of tribal Culture of the Africans. Like, many tribes, in Yoruba tribes God means their ancestors, they remember and worship the adventurous and glorious deeds of their ancestors. They believe that ancestors secure them from the sky; these beliefs lead them to pray and worship their forefathers.

Soyinka applies various myths, metaphor, and symbol in order to present the Yoruba culture on the stage. The African traditional religion is also explored throughout his plays by implementing the African God Yoruba. Soyinka in his plays operates on issues like corruption, politics, effect of war, Social issues like bad practices, rituals, etc. Soyinka’s plays are works on mode of satire and tragedy. As Adrian Roscore remarks, “Soyinka brought the marks of gloom and misery from the womb. They were branded on his soul at the moment of conception and his experience of life in a brutal world has served only to burn in the marks more deeply” (48). Thus, his plays are response to particular pressing issues of his society and address the problem of Nigeria.

Soyinka as the twentieth century African writer has achieved worldwide fame due to his ingenious literary output. As a Nigerian dramatist director, poet and novelist, has proved as one of the most important contemporary African dramatists writing in English. Though he has tried his hands in all the three forms, his plays are the sure manifestation of his mastermind. His writing often modeled with the heightened poetic quality. It stated as, “Soyinka’s works play a role in reclaiming the value and dignity of a past insulted by European representation as well as in connecting the eternal varieties and universalities of a liberal criticism.” (Mohmmad 153-54)
Wole Soyinka’s plays are of universal value and most relevant to modern times after getting the award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1986. Soyinka utters his own success as, “There is no question at all that I think the Nobel prize is for my drama and I think the prize is a recognition of the whole African literary tradition on which my work is based by the outside world and by the African world itself”(qtd. Jeyifo144). It is an undeniable fact that they would challenge consideration is the best of audience and claims memorable place in the realm of literature. Wole Soyinka has its roots in Yoruba culture; apart from having born Yoruba and being naturally a part of the culture, he has taken deep and scholarly interests in the culture of his people.

Soyinka mostly depends on ritual and traditional sources for composing the play with the use of the raw materials like myths and certain formal properties to furnish the play. Ritual and traditional sources like dance, drums, music and songs are the backbone his plays. As Oyin Ogunba asserts that “Soyinka has the reputation in certain circles in Nigeria….. of being the artist par excellence in an ultra-modern, twentieth century sense, a man against the establishment, a firm believer in the absolute freedom of the individual.” (6)

The African traditional religion is also exposed thorough his nine plays by implementing the African God Yoruba. Soyinka’s specialty lies in his art of presentation of Yoruba culture on the stage. Soyinka in his plays operates issues like poverty, corruption and effect of war on common people in Nigerian society in general and custom, tradition, belief an rituals of the Yoruba society in particular. Soyinka’s nine plays in the present thesis is record of experience of African Yoruba tribe in twentieth century.
*The Lion and the Jewel* is the first play in the present thesis highlighted cultural conflict between Yoruba and Western Society. Every character divided into two categories. Sidi and Baroka on the side of Yoruba Culture on the other hand, Lakunle depict Western Culture. Soyinka exposes some terrible Yoruba traditions like, Dowry system, Polygamy system and materialization in marriages.

The play represents conflict between Lakunle as a Western and Baroka as a traditional follower signify the condition of the Nigerian Society before the independence. At the end, victory of the baroka denotes Soyinka’s affinity towards Yoruba Culture. In the incidence, when photographer enters into the village camera and bike became the centre of attraction for the girls, Soyinka shows the backwardness of the Yoruba Society. Soyinka also exposes presence of the nature as integral part for Yoruba people; it highlighted various imagery of ‘Nature’ in the play. Such as the title Lion and Jewel itself express imagery of Nature.

*The Swamp Dwellers*, the title of the play, represents muddy atmosphere of the play. It represents the conflict between city and rural life. Soyinka exposes relationship between different people in the same family. Soyinka highlighted breakage of the family bonding due to the money, illustrates unfavourable condition of the places like delta regions in Nigeria. *The Swamp Dwellers* also focus on migration of the people into the city area cause’s issues like corruption, unemployment, and crime in Yoruba Society.

Soyinka’s every character represents urban and rural side of the Society. In one hand, Awuchike attracts towards city whereas Igwezu and old couple on
the rural side of the Society. Some of the minor characters like Desala, Priest represent greedy persons in the Society. Beggar became the positive force brings hope in Yoruba Society. Thus, in *The Swamp Dwellers* Soyinka portray the contemporary African Society by involving myths and rituals on a very realistic level. Thus, he succeeds focuses on loss of traditional value and loss of hope among the Young generation with cultural and moral reference in the modern world.

*The Trials of Brother Jero*, title of the character represents influence of the central character throughout the play. Jero is a prophet by nature; his prophecy becomes the target issues in the Society. Soyinka exposes dominance of Christianity in the Society through every action and attire of Jero. Jero presents as a mirror image of the national leadership, presents the solution for extreme sanitization of politics, religion law and morality.

The play represents self–independent women in Yoruba Society through the character of Amope. She portrayed as a bold, independent, caring and responsible women in the Society. On the other hand, Chume represents as a common man in Yoruba Society, becomes easily victim target of the person like Jero. It is a hilarious comic- satire on the gullible and Pseudo –religious institutions in which Soyinka explores sensitive subject of corruption; dominance of religion and their practitioners in the Yoruba Society.

*A Dance of the Forests* is a fourth play in the present research work celebrates occasion of Nigerian independence. Soyinka focuses on present, past and future world depends upon historical background which is an integral product of Yoruba Society. Soyinka explores the memory of salve trade and the
present chaotic condition of society. In A Dance of the Forest, drumming, singing, and dancing signify the celebration of Nigerian independence. Hence, Peter comments as “A Dance of the Forests presents “a piece of co placement rhetoric, anapocayptic vision of a dreadful future.” (Peters 9)

Thus, A Dance of the Forests influenced with Yoruba cosmology delivered through traditional dance and mime. It is an important part of traditional African cosmology and African history. Soyinka assimilated Nature as imagery to highlight the play with the influence of Ogun in Yoruba Society. The relationship between living men, dead and unborn with nature and god creates unusual environment.

The Strong Breed is a fifth play in the present research work. It is a serious play with a tragic character Eman at the centre, Soyinka has depicts theme of the traditional Society came in conflict with the modern values resulting in death and suffering of the individuals.

The Strong Breed focuses on the relationship between the individual and society. According to Soyinka, “It is based on the fact that there is a primitive interviewing of each individual with the fate of the entire community” (MLA53). Soyinka focus on ritual became integral part of the society in which human sacrifice for the sake of society. He represents the social issues in Yoruba Society like, lack of knowledge about medical facilities; misconceptions about the customs etc.

The Strong Breed demonstrates Soyinka’s growing awareness of the traditional African rituals and festivals and their potential dramatic qualities. Soyinka directly or indirectly touches the issues like the Tradition, ritual,
customs of the Yoruba Society through characters, festivals, Songs, dance, belongs to Yoruba Society confirm playwright’s deep association with the root of the Yoruba tribe.

*The Road* dramatizes the conflict between the traditional and modern age. Soyinka concerns with government in Nigeria when leader engaged in despotism and corruption. The Yoruba Myths and the rituals set the background. The Road, discuss about Yoruba festivals predominantly come at the time of harvest when there is plenty to eat and drink. Some trees and crops perform prominent role in Yoruba culture. Such as palm wine one of the products of the oil palm, as universal drink used to drink at the time of ceremony and celebration. It is the wine of professor’s special version for the rite of community in the Road.

*The Road* presents an enigmatic protagonist referred as ‘Professor’ creates the accidents on road in order to loot the wrecks. The myth of Ogun and the ritual of egungun mask dance are used as the sub text to highlight the play. Professor’s religious and philosophical pretensions win him admiration among the roadside dwellers. The play ends with professor fool’s himself more than anymore else about the validity of his quest. Moreover, every character in the play influenced by Professor. Soyinka highlighted unrest youth in the Nigerian Society turn into explosive when comes in contact with person like Professor.

*Kongi’s Harvest* was written at a time when Nigeria was faced with the problems of a newly independent nation trying to restructure the economy, Society and Political System. Soyinka employing harvest festival as a metaphor makes a scathing attack on the African dictators their love of power. It is a
brilliant satire on moral values. Soyinka deals with human problems thought to be the result of violation of the natural order, by individuals and groups.

*Kongi’s Harvest* is about the conflict between two protagonists, Old King Danlola and the dictator Kongi. Soyinka represents Kongi’s preoccupation with an imagined Omnipotent leader. Soyinka uses devices such as drumming, singing, dancing for highlighted real incidence in the society to explore a political side of the Nigeria.

*Madmen and Specialist* explores Soyinka’s personal experience in the prison tied with the devastating civil war. It reflects the mood of the time marked by bloodshed, greed and the premonition of a sinister holocaust. Thus, *Madmen and Specialist* explores the dehumanization of society under ill effects of war. Soyinka throughout his play tries to resist totalitarianism to defend democracy.

*Death and the king’s Horseman* is strongly rooted in the Yoruba metaphysical concepts of death and ritual sacrifice. It deals with a conflict between the past and the present. Soyinka touches the aspect of ritual suicide a very popular custom in Yoruba Society. According to Yoruba Society, King’s horseman should be died after the death of his master. *Death and King’s Horseman* fully equipped with the use of devices such as drumming, singing, dancing, feasting and sacrifice deal with real incidence happened in the Society. Every scenes and characters such as Market scenes, Ball party, Black dress, Women Characters, Masks, Egungun dance creates Yoruba atmosphere. Thus, Soyinka deals with concept of sacrifice for the sake of society.
Thus, death and complexity in Soyinka’s works arises his deep mental association with the cultural paradigm of his people, the Yoruba, their mores, their myths, and above all their rituals.

Soyinka exposes the complex social, economic and cultural issue of Yoruba peoples through his innovative dramatic art. Therefore, he is an outstanding, unique and universal dramatist in theatres across the world in general and African (Yoruba) in particular.

Soyinka’s plays explore a question like, cultural clash, corruption, creative- destructive duality in man, craze for power, the selfishness of man etc. It is based on myths and rituals. Myths, masks and rituals are interlinked to understanding of Man. Soyinka uses all this aspects in his plays. Again, his plays are steeped in the philosophy of Yoruba tragedy. Soyinka uses Yoruba cultural elements in his plays like agemo a religious cult of flesh dissolution, the concept of the earthly mothers, forest spirit and gods.

Thus, the present research work focus on Soyinka’s sincere attempt to highlight numerous issues in the Yoruba Society before and after the independence of Nigeria. Each of the play in the present research work focus on Nigerian based Yoruba Society. Thus, Soyinka succeeded presenting Social, political and cultural side of the Nigeria.
Work Cited:-


